

A Solar Litany from the Tomb of Ramesses IX

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Abstract

A litany, consisting of twenty-four addresses by the sun god to the inhabitants of the Duat, is discussed. The text, attested first in a highly fragmentary, cryptographic copy from the Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos, appears largely complete in the burial chamber of Ramesses IX. After a brief discussion of the litany's significance with regard to the union of Re and Osiris, a complete transliteration and translation are presented, based upon a recent collation of the text, revealing numerous corrections and clarifications to an earlier hieroglyphic facsimile, published by Guilmant.

In a recent *JARCE* article, I presented translations and co(n)textual analyses of a number of cryptographic texts from the cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos.¹ Among the parallels discussed in that paper was a litany from the tomb of Ramesses IX (KV 6), which occurs on the right wall of the burial chamber as part of that king's Book of the Earth.² The litany was published first by Guilmant, who provided a copy of the hieroglyphic text in his 1907 edition of the decoration from KV 6 (fig. 1).³ Since that early publication, the passage in question has remained largely overlooked.⁴ In my 2007 doctoral thesis, I presented the first translation of the full litany, based upon Guilmant's copy of the text.⁵ In 2008, I was given the opportunity to study and photograph the passage in situ (fig. 2), while on fellowship with the American Research Center in Egypt. Subsequent collation of these photographs against Guilmant's original publication has now brought to light a number of inaccuracies in the earlier hieroglyphic facsimile.⁶ The present article was conceived as a means of bringing this important solar litany to a wider audience, while taking into account the improved sign readings developed from the recent collation.

¹ Joshua Roberson, "An Enigmatic Wall from the Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos," *JARCE* 43 (2007), 93–112; a hand copy of the texts in question, without translation, appeared already in Henri Frankfort, Adrian De Buck, and Battiscombe Gunn, *The Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos*, EES Memoir 39 (London, 1933), vol. 2, pl. 87.

² The earlier version of Seti I occurs also in the context of a known Book of the Earth scene and texts.

³ Félix Guilmant, *Le tombeau de Ramsès IX* (Cairo, 1907), pl. 92.

⁴ The text, identified as the "24 Anrufe des Sonnengottes," is mentioned briefly in Friedrich Abitz, "Der Bauablauf und die Dekoration des Grabes Ramses' IX," *SAK* 17 (1990), 34–35; and idem, "The Structure of the Decoration in the Tomb of Ramesses IX," in C. N. Reeves, ed., *After Tut'ankhamūn. Research and Excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes* (London-New York, 1992), 180, which lists "the twenty-four spells of Re" among Ramesses IX's newly created scenes and texts. Thus, also Alexandre Piankoff, *La création du disque solaire* (Cairo, 1953), 63, who refers only to the presence of "un long discours du dieu Râ que celui-ci est censé prononcer au moment de la traversée de la Douat." A translation of the sixteenth address of the litany also appears in Colleen Manassa, *The Late Egyptian Underworld: Sarcophagi and Related Texts from the Nectanebid Period* (Wiesbaden, 2007), 52, for which, see n. 38, below.

⁵ Joshua Roberson, *The Book of the Earth: Ancient Egyptian Symbol-Systems and the Evolution of New Kingdom Cosmographic Models* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 766–70.

⁶ On the lack of clarity in Guilmant's edition, see Piankoff, *Création*, 63, n. 4, with regard to the hieratic annotations to a scene depicting the birth of the hours, which lies to the immediate right of the present text.

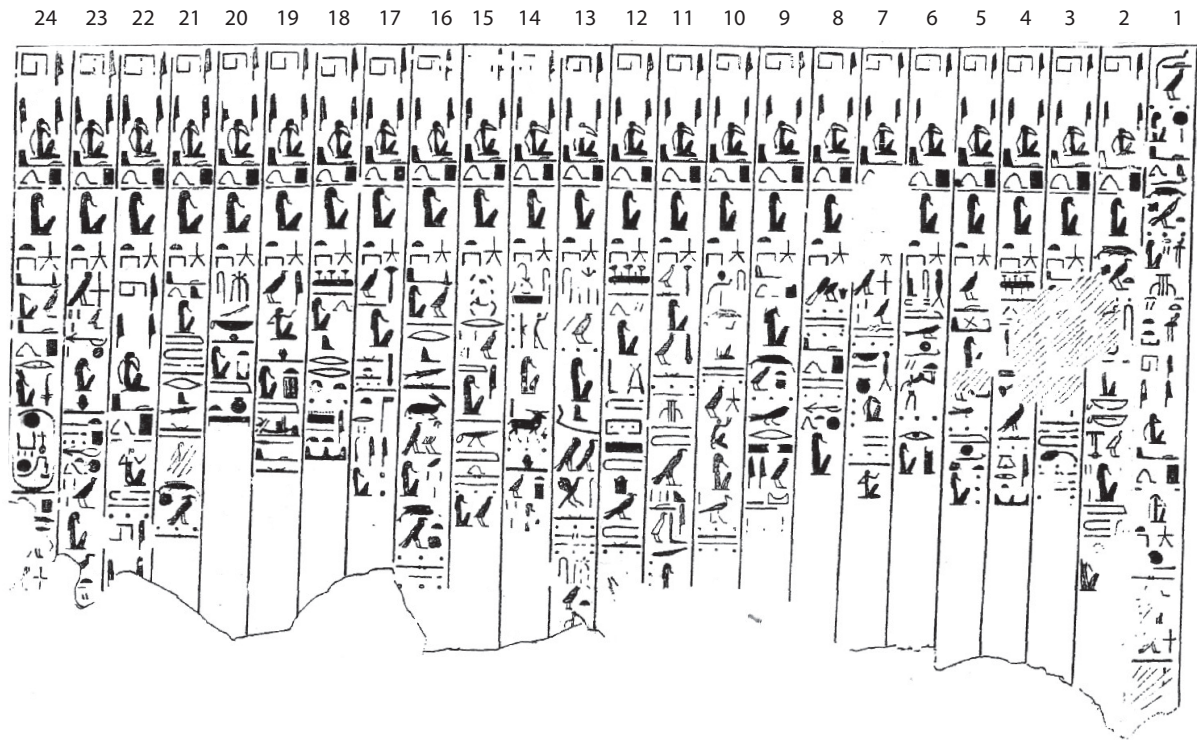


Fig. 1. Solar litany from the burial chamber of Ramesses IX, after Guilmant, *Ramsès IX*, pl. 92.

An introductory title identifies the text as *ddw R' q=f h3.t Jmn.tj hntj jmnt.t*, “THE SPEECH⁷ of Re, when he enters the corpse of the Westerner, who is Foremost of the West.”⁸ The Westerner occurs elsewhere in the Underworld Books as an epithet of the deceased Osiris,⁹ as suggested also here by his epithet “Foremost of the West,” a relatively common variant of *hntj jmnt.tjw*, “Foremost of the Westerners.”¹⁰ The description of Re entering the Westerner’s corpse also recalls a description of the Osirian mummy as *h3(.t) jmj R'*, “the corpse in which Re is,” from the Book of the Earth of Ramesses VI.¹¹ The following solar litany therefore takes place at the moment of Re’s nightly union with Osiris.

⁷ The first word of the heading has been written in red ink, as a rubric, the remainder of the text being a uniform blue-black.

⁸ Cf., the lengthy “speech of Re to the Westerner” (*ddw R' n Jmn.tj*), which includes also an address to the latter god’s corpse, as attested in the Book of the Earth of Ramesses VI (Piankoff, *Création*, pls. 5, 6–6, 8; Roberson, *Book of the Earth*, 569–73); a brief allusion to the sun god speaking before the Westerner appears already in the Book of Adoring Re in the West/Litany of Re (Erik Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei)* [Basel-Geneva, 1975–76], vol. 1, 124; vol. 2, 77 and n. 292, identifying the Westerner as the chthonic form of the sun god).

⁹ Specifically, in his role as the god from whose body Horus emerges (Christian Leitz, *LGG 1* [Leiden-Paris-Dudley, 2002], 359, exs. 4–5; for the former example, see also Roberson, *Book of the Earth*, 146–47). Cf. the similar epithet *h3.t jmnt.t*, “corpse of the West,” which occurs as the twenty-seventh manifestation of the sun in the Book of the Adoring Re in the West/Litany of Re (Hornung, *Sonnenlitanei*, vol. 1, 32; vol. 2, 65 and n. 79).

¹⁰ Leitz, *LGG 5*, 783–86; notes that, although associated most often with Osiris, *hntj jmnt.t*, “Foremost of the West,” occurs also in conjunction with a variety of other deities, e.g., Amun-Re and Anubis.

¹¹ Piankoff, *Création*, 9; Roberson, *Book of the Earth*, 335–39. The translation of *jmj* as a reverse nisbe follows Erik Hornung, *Ägyptische Unterweltbücher* (Zurich-Munich, 1972), 429.

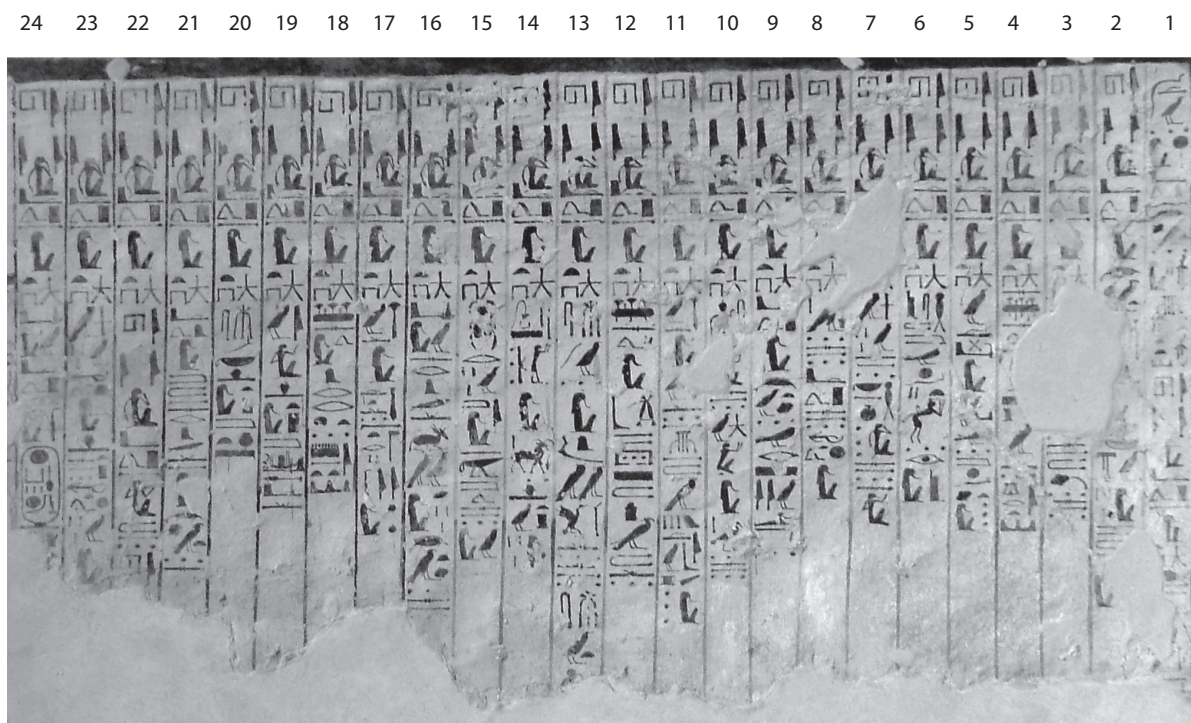


Fig. 2. *Ramesses IX solar litany*, as photographed in 2008 (photograph by the author).

This event, which is one of the central theological components of the various Underworld Books, was initiated within the deepest cavern of the *Duat* and culminated ultimately in the spectacular emergence of the gigantic, unified deity from the eastern horizon.¹² It is the latter event that appears to provide the setting for the remainder of the text, as suggested by references to the sun god's destruction of solar and Osirian enemies,¹³ as well as the emphatic past-tense of the litany itself, which consists of twenty-four addresses, *j hy ꜥ.p.n=j dꜣ.t*, "Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*,"¹⁴ followed most often by one or more adjuncts qualifying the nature or purpose of the sun god's completed nocturnal voyage.¹⁵ The repetitive structure and basic syntax of the text are characteristic of litanies employed in the Underworld

¹² For the union of Re and Osiris at the midpoint of the Underworld, see Erik Hornung, *Das Amduat. Die Schrift des verbor-genen Raumes* (Wiesbaden, 1963), 116, 124 (sixth hour); for the emergence of the giant, unified deity from the eastern horizon, see John Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity. Cryptographic Compositions from the Tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX*, OBO 198 (Fribourg-Göttingen, 2004), 374–424.

¹³ See below, cols. 5–6. For the punishment of the damned by the unified Re-Osiris in the eastern horizon, see Darnell, *Solar-Osirian Unity*, 145–46, 389.

¹⁴ Plus variants *ꜥ.p.n=j hꜣ.wt*, "I have traversed the corpses" and *ꜥ.p.n=j ꜥn*, "I have traversed you (all)" (see below, cols. 2 and 22, respectively).

¹⁵ The "emphatic" character of *ꜥ.p.n=j dꜣ.t* in each case is absolutely clear: as the repeated element of the litany, "I have traversed the *Dat*" is, by definition, given/thematic information, while each of the following, non-repeating adverb and purpose clauses provide new/rhematic qualification. In the following translations, I have deliberately avoided the use of overly literal or awkward cleft-sentence constructions in favor of simple emphasizing adverbs ("only" or "even"), wherever possible. In cases where the prospective (subjunctive) *sdm=f* occurs as an emphasized clause of purpose, the translation "Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might . . ." conveys the requisite theme + rheme information without the need for further adverbial qualification (thus, also H. J. Polotsky, *Egyptian Tenses* [Jerusalem, 1965], 10, §23).

Books, generally.¹⁶ The grammar is uniformly Middle Egyptian. The script, however, betrays the influence of contemporary Late Egyptian at every turn, as seen in the frequent inclusion of superfluous signs (esp. plural dots, various strokes, and weak consonants) and the interchange of *t* and *ṯ*.¹⁷

As mentioned above, the solar litany from the burial chamber of Ramesses IX appears first in a fragmentary cryptographic passage from the cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos.¹⁸ Aside from the scripts employed, the principle difference between the two versions lies in the regular division of the Ramesses IX text into twenty-four columns, one for each of the sun god's addresses. Abitz has suggested plausibly that the twenty-four addresses reflect the combined hours of the sun's diurnal and nocturnal cycles.¹⁹ The transliteration and translation provided below reflect this discrete arrangement. Hieroglyphic groups whose readings have been corrected or clarified from Guilman's publication have been indicated in bold in the transliteration.

[1] *ḏdw R' q=f ḥḏ.t Jmn.tj ḥntj jmnt.t j hy 'p.n=j dḏ.t ḥns[=j]*²⁰ *jmj ṯ*²¹

The speech of Re, when he enters the corpse of the Westerner, who is Foremost of the West:
Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that [I] might cross the one who is in the earth.

[2] *j hy 'p.n=j ḥḏ.wt s[ḥḏ].n=j kkw(j).w m jtn=j*

Oho! I have traversed the corpses, only after having illu[minated] the ones who belong to darkness by means of my disc.

[3] *j hy 'p.n=j dḏ.t [dj=j]*²² [. . .] *snṯ.w=sn*²³

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, [so that I (?) might give/cause . . .] their limbs.

[4] *j hy 'p.n=j dḏ.t ṣṣs*²⁴ *.n[=j]*²⁵ *ṣṣ.w*²⁶ *jgr.t*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, only after having passed through the mysteries of *Igeret*.

[5] *j hy 'p.n=j dḏ.t wd=j ḏw.w*²⁷ *m ḥftj.w=j*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might inflict harm upon my enemies.


¹⁶ For which, see Andrew Baumann, *The Suffix Conjugation of Early Egyptian as Evidenced in the Underworld Books* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1998), 104–5; for repetition as a feature of litanies in other contexts, see also Jan Assmann, “Litanei,” in *LÄ* 3, 1062–64. The closest parallel to the present text, in terms of vocabulary and phrasing, occurs in a litany from a Book of the Earth inscribed in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty tomb of Horira'a at Saqqara, in which Osiris speaks with regard to Re: *j hy 'p.n=f* (var., *R' dwḏ.t*, “Oho! He (var., “Ra”) has traversed the *Duat*,” plus various adjuncts (Roberson, *Book of the Earth*, 821–25; with additional, general comments on the Horira'a book in Roberto Buongarzone, “Una nuova versione del Libro della Terra,” *Vincino Oriente* 11 [1998], 43–52).

¹⁷ These features are characteristic of the broader Book of the Earth corpus generally, for which see Roberson, *Book of the Earth*, 347–431.

¹⁸ See Roberson, “An Enigmatic Wall,” 100–103.

¹⁹ Abitz, “Bauablauf,” 35.

²⁰ Part of the face, beard, and bent knee of the seated god employed for the first-person suffix are still visible.

²¹ Guilman's transcription omits a clearly visible, vertical stroke beneath the horizontal land-hieroglyph; the damaged group almost certainly represents , or the like.

²² None of the signs in this group are now extant. The reading offered here is merely an educated guess based on Guilman's copy, which appears to show most of the *dj* arm and loaf (?) above part of a round sign, corresponding approximately to the position of the head of the seated man in other examples of *dj=j* (cf. cols. 16, 24, and n. 37).

²³ Guilman's copy includes an additional horizontal stroke before the plural dots of *sn*, which is not present in the original.

²⁴ The *s* preceding this word is probably an error, anticipating the phonetic compliment of *ṣṣs*, as there is no otherwise attested root **ṣṣs*; still less likely is the possibility that the *s* represents a suffix attached to the preceding word, which would disrupt the uniformity of the repeated element. In Guilman's copy, *ṣṣs* includes a triangular determinative of some sort, but a closer examination of the preserved traces suggests that this apparent triangle is merely the walking legs employed with the same verb in cols. 12 and 18.

²⁵ Only the back of the seated figure is visible.

²⁶ Guilman's copy shows an unclear, diagonal sign beneath the *ṣ*-pool hieroglyph; the former shape, which is clearly visible on the wall, actually represents a potter's kiln (Gardiner sign list: U30), corresponding to the normal spelling of *ṣtḏ* (*Wb.* IV, 551).

²⁷ The *ḏw*-mountain and most of the following quail chick-*w* are both clearly visible.

- [6] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t <h̄tm>*²⁸*(=j) h̄ftj.w Wsjr*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that (I) might <destroy> the enemies of Osiris.
- [7] | *j hy* *‘p.n[=j d3.t] jmj.w=sn h̄knw=sn n=j*
 Oho! [I] have traversed [the *Dat*], even while the ones who are with them were giving praise to me.²⁹
- [8] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t b3.w*³⁰*=sn ‘p=sn h̄t(w)=j*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, even while their *bas* were following after me.
- [9] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t ‘p=j h̄3.wt wršwy.w*³¹
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might pass the corpses of the awakened ones.
- [10] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t šd̄ [h̄3.t]*³²*=j sn dw3=j b3.w=sn*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that my [corpse] might illuminate them, and so that I might praise their *bas*.
- [11] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t wd̄*³³*=j md.w n h̄ntj.w jdb(j).w*³⁴
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might issue commands to those who are foremost of the shore-dwellers.
- [12] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t š3s=j db3.wt št3.wt*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might pass through the mysterious sarcophagi.
- [13] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t msw.w(t)*³⁵*=j qm3*³⁶*=sn msw.[w?]t[=j?]*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, even as my divine forms begat [my?] child[ren?].
- [14] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t sw3s=j b3.w h̄tp.w*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might honor the *bas* of the ones who rest.
- [15] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t h̄pr.w jm(j.w)=j šm=sn wj*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, even while the manifestations within me were leading me.
- [16] | *j hy* *‘p.n=j d3.t dj*³⁷*=j srq jwtjw=j h̄3.wt=sn*
 Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might cause that my putrefaction permits their corpses to breathe.³⁸

²⁸ The medial *s* probably represents a superfluous “phonetic compliment” to the following seat hieroglyph (Gardiner sign list: Q1), which was misunderstood by the copyist as possessing its usual biliteral value *st*, rather than trilateral *h̄tm* (for which, see Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 500).

²⁹ For the use of the subject + *sdm=f* as an emphasized clause of circumstance, see references in Roberson, “An Enigmatic Wall,” 102, n. 49. The Ramesses IX litany seems to employ the subject + *sdm=f* consistently when the emphasized adjunct expresses concomitant action (thus, also cols. 8, 13, 15, 19, and 23).

³⁰ Substituting the 3-vulture (?) for the *b3*-bird (for which, see Darnell, *Solar-Osirian Unity*, 42, n. 23). The small sign in front of the bird, transcribed as a heart (?) in Guilman’s copy, is actually the smoking brazier (Gardiner sign list: R7), which is the usual phonetic compliment of *b3* (*Wb.* I, 411); Guilman’s copy also omits a vertical stroke behind the bird, for which, cf. col. 10, end (*b3.w=sn*).

³¹ Guilman’s copy shows a *dw*-mountain and several horizontal and vertical traces following *wršwy*. This group actually represents the determinative for the latter word: a prone figure with upraised head, atop a bed, followed by plural dots, for which, cf. also Hornung, *Sonnenlitanei*, vol. 1, 274 (Merneptah; noting also the more usual spelling, *wršyw*, employed in all sources).

³² Guilman’s copy shows a *h̄3*-fish plus a determinative or phonetic compliment (?), which are no longer preserved.

³³ On the use of the *w3d*-column for biliteral *wd̄*, see Gardiner, *Grammar*³, 480; cf. also col. 17.

³⁴ The sign resembling a horn in Guilman’s copy, just above the seated man and plural dots, actually represents the “tongue of land” (Gardiner sign list: N21) on the right, followed by an irrigation canal (Gardiner sign list: N23), which are the usual determinatives for *jdb*, “shore” (*Wb.* I, 153).

³⁵ Spellings of *msw.t*, “(divine) form/manifestation,” without the final *t* are characteristic of texts from the later New Kingdom onward (*Wb.* II, 141.14).

³⁶ The *m* and 3 phonetic compliments have been reversed.

³⁷ The quail chick following *dj* should probably be regarded superfluous (but note also the same construction in col. 24). A reading **dj wj* is impossible without a following noun to serve as subject to *dj*; likewise, an interpretation of the verb form as the *sdmw=f*, which would require the stem *rdj*.

³⁸ For a concise, recent discussion of the religious (esp. Osirian) significance of *jwtjw*, “putrefaction,” see Manassa, *Late Egyptian Underworld*, 51–52, including the present example. Note, however, that Manassa’s translation of the emphasized purpose

| 17| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t wd=j md.wt*³⁹ *n ntr.tj=j*⁴⁰

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might issue commands to my two goddesses.

| 18| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t š3s=j qrr.wt jmnt.t*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might pass through the caverns of the West.

| 19| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t jw=j htp=j m wj3 3*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, even while resting within the great barque.

| 20| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t ms=k(w) htp=j m Nw.t*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, only after having been (re-)born,⁴¹ while resting within Nut.

| 21| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t 'q=j m=tn srq.n[=j]*⁴² *h3.wt=s[n]*⁴³

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might enter into you (all), after having permitted th[eir] corpses to breathe.

| 22| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t j hy 'p.n=j tn j hy [. . .]*

Oho! (Thus it is,) that I have traversed the *Dat*!⁴⁴ Oho! (Thus it is,) that I have traversed you (all)! Oho! [. . .]!

| 23| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t jmj.w-ht=j htp=sn htw*⁴⁵*=j [. . .]*⁴⁶

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, even while my followers were resting behind me [. . .].

| 24| *j hy 'p.n=j d3.t dj*⁴⁷*=j 'p Wsjr-(n)sw (Nfr-k3-R' stp n R')| p[w] m3' hrw jmj [. . .]*

Oho! I have traversed the *Dat*, so that I might cause that the Osiris-king, th[is] (Ramesses IX)|, justified, traverse that which is in [. . .].⁴⁸

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clause, “. . . so that I might give breath to the rotting ones and their corpses,” which takes the seated man following *jwtyw* as a determinative, fails to account for the fact that, in the present text, every other occurrence of the seated god *after* plural strokes or dots represents the first person suffix (e.g., col. 5, *hftj.w=j*; col. 13, *msw.w(t)=j*; thus also with the dual marker in col. 17, *ntr.tj=j*); when the same sign (or any other human or animal figure) functions as a determinative in this text, it invariably precedes any plural strokes/dots (e.g., col. 2, *kkw(j).w*; col. 11, *jdb(j).w*; col. 14, *htp.w*). The fact that the sun god speaks of his own putrefaction presumably relates to his inhabitation of the corpse of the Westerner (= Osiris), as stated explicitly in the introductory title.

³⁹ Behind the vertical *md*-hieroglyph, Guilmant transcribes a book-roll above a bread-loaf *t*, a second book-roll, and plural dots. The first “book-roll” actually represents the *d*-hand, serving as a phonetic compliment to *md*.

⁴⁰ The seated figure at the end of the word is clearly male, hence an unlikely determinative for *ntr.tj*, “two goddesses”; also see n. 38, above, with regard to the placement of the seated god hieroglyph, when employed as the first person suffix.

⁴¹ For other examples of *ms(j)* referring to the re-birth of the sun god, see *Wb. Belegstellen* II, 201.14.

⁴² Guilmant's copy shows only a vague curve within a damaged area; the wall actually preserves most of the head and base of the seated figure.

⁴³ Faint traces of the signs below *s*, presumably *n* and plural dots, are still visible.

⁴⁴ For the nominal/emphatic *sdm.n=f* without a following emphasized adverbial adjunct, cf. Karl Jansen-Winkeln, “Sprachliche Bemerkungen zu den ‘Unterweltbüchern’,” *SÄK* 32 (2004), 205–32, who discusses the common construction *wmn=sn m šhr pn*, for which he proposes the translation “(Es ist so,) daß sie in dieser Art sind.”

⁴⁵ For *htw* as a variant of (*m*)-*ht*, attested especially in the royal tombs of the Ramessid period, see *Wb.* III, 344.8.

⁴⁶ Guilmant's copy shows a bread loaf-*t*, part of a quail chick or vulture, and dual strokes, all of which have since been destroyed.

⁴⁷ See col. 16, n. 37.

⁴⁸ Perhaps originally, “that which/the one who is in [the earth]”? Such a reconstruction would provide a parallel to the sun god's statement about his own travels in col. 1, thereby linking the beginning and end of the text, an argument that gains strength if one accepts Abitz's suggestion regarding the relationship between the twenty-four addresses and the hours of the day and night (see n. 19, above).